



Serving Montana... Ava Cook

Service: Senior Corps, Lolo

Three Words that describe Ava:

- Energetic
- Visionary
- Compassionate



Ava Cook receiving the 2010 ServeMontana Award from Lieutenant Governor Bohlinger, First Lady Nancy Schweitzer and Commission Chair Chris Kolstad

Ava's Service Story: Ava Cook has been giving of herself and making an impact volunteering for many years. Since formally joining Missoula Aging Services' volunteer programs in 2003, Ava has

logged more than 8,000 hours as a volunteer. She has volunteered in Missoula since moving there in 1996. She began taking an autistic woman and animals to Village Health Rest Home for the senior's enjoyment. The same woman joined Ava as a volunteer at the Missoula Food Bank and as one food bank employee observed, Ava showed an incredible amount of patience and caring with this individual of special needs.

Perhaps the crowning achievement of Ava's volunteer career is the establishment of a food bank in Lolo, Montana. The seed was planted about five years ago when the Missoula Food Bank, appreciative of the energy Ava brought to her work for over 15 years, suggested an operation in Lolo. "She just seemed like a natural to do it, according to the food



bank's volunteer coordinator," Dorey Rowland. "She brings so much energy to the program and is very good with people."

Making a Difference: Numerous organizations have benefitted from Ava's commitment to volunteerism, including the Animal Humane Society's "Hug a Pet" program, Red Cross outreach, Youth for Christ student luncheons, Village Rest Home, Missoula Aging Services' Care Management, ROOTS Food Delivery, International Wildlife Film Festival, Ronald McDonald House and the RSVP Task Force. She began working as a "Hug a Pet" volunteer in 1996. This special program takes companion animals to nursing homes so that residents and shelter animals can interact. Studies

have shown that this program improves the emotional and physical condition of the people interacting with animals. She has also been instrumental in soliciting donations from the community for the Lolo Food Bank, which has recently experienced some its heaviest use. Ava's goal is to increase the number of families using the program and number of days of availability each month so individuals do not spend valuable resources traveling to Missoula for the needed food.



"Volunteerism" ...in Ava's words: If a person has the time to give back, volunteering is a wonderful way to spend their time. That's what God wants us to do, to help other people. It is very rewarding. When I first started, I worked with an autistic woman and it really taught me a lot. She loved people and joined me in volunteer activities with the food bank, the Animal Humane Society and the Red Cross. I have four terrific ladies that help each week at the food bank now, and we have so much fun! The 98-year old volunteer is the one that wears me out the most! Volunteering definitely keeps you young—it keeps me going.

The Governor's Office of Community Service and the Montana Commission on Community Service greatly appreciates Ava's contribution to her community.

Thank you to Vicky Bostick for letting us know about Ava!

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